

AT A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY, VIRGINIA HELD ON THE 29TH DAY OF MARCH, 2012 AT 6:00 P.M. IN THE BOARD CHAMBERS, MONTGOMERY COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER, 755 ROANOKE STREET, CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA:

PRESENT:	James D. Politis	-Chair
	William H. Brown	-Vice Chair
	Mary W. Biggs	-Supervisors
	Gary D. Creed	
	Annette S. Perkins	
	Christopher A. Tuck	
	L. Carol Edmonds	-Assistant County Administrator
	Martin M. McMahon	-County Attorney
	Angie Hill	-Financial & Management Services Director
	Marc Magruder	-Budget Manager
	Paula Alston	-Library Director
	Ruth Richey	-Public Information Officer
	Judy W. Kiser	-Assistant to the County Administrator
ABSENT:	Matthew R. Gabriele	-Supervisor
	F. Craig Meadows	-County Administrator

CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order and announced that the Board Chambers have a room capacity of approximately 210 and that seats had been set up in the lobby for everyone over the seating limit. He also announced that Supervisor Matthew Gabriele and County Administrator Craig Meadows were absent. Supervisor Gabriele was absent due to an out-of-town appointment that was scheduled prior to this public hearing being scheduled. The County Administrator was absent because of a medical emergency in his family.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Advertised Real Estate Tax Rate - 87¢ per \$100 of Assessed Value

The Chair called the public hearing to order for the purpose of receiving comments on the county's advertised real estate tax rate of 87¢ for \$100 of assessed value. This represents the 12¢ increase in the current rate. The Board of Supervisors voted to consider a maximum tax rate of 87 cents for advertising purposes only. The Board of Supervisors will approve a rate at or below this rate. In order to approve a higher rate, the Board would be required to re-advertise and hold another public hearing.

The Chair asked that each speaker come to the podium and state their name and address, and direct their comments to the Chair and the members of the Board, not to the audience or the county staff. Each speaker will be allowed five minutes. He explained that this was the Board's time to listen to the citizens, so members of the Board would not be answering questions during the hearings. He asked that the audience please refrain from applauding between speakers, and that any written comments be left with the Clerk.

Supervisor Gary Creed submitted a petition from citizens who oppose the proposed tax increase, with 242 signatures. Another petition was submitted via e-mail in favor of supporting the schools with the proposed 12¢ tax increase, which listed 208 names.

Paul Smeal 1107 Kentwood Drive, Blacksburg. Mr. Smeal has been a resident of Montgomery County for 52 years, and currently serves on the Montgomery County Parks and Recreation Commission. He spoke about the growth the Parks and Recreation Department has been experiencing, such as adding additional signs, etc. at the Merrimac Mine and the development of the Frisbee Park. He believes that this department not only provides leisure time activities and programs for the citizens of Montgomery County, but also has an economic impact. He was recently told by someone at Play It Again Sports that they sell 10,000 frisbees a year, which has an economic impact. Mr. Smeal also spoke in support of the library system which he visits at least once or twice a week to receive books on CDs. For these reasons he supports the proposed 12¢ tax rate increase.

Ann Page 2568 Mud Pike Road, Christiansburg. Ms. Page, speaking as a member of the Library Board, encouraged the Board to approve the tax rate increase and adopt the proposed budget. This will ensure that the library can continue to meet the needs of the citizens of Montgomery County through a variety of services which provides both entertainment and information. She thanked the Board for their past support and asked that they approve the 12¢ tax increase and adopt the proposed budget.

Gene Hyde 1310 Hillcrest, Blacksburg. Mr. Hyde also spoke as a member of the Library Board. He thanked the Board of Supervisors for their ongoing support of the library system. He reported that more than 37,000 county residents have library cards, which is approximately 39% of the population of the county. During the first eight months of this fiscal year, from July to last February the Blacksburg, Christiansburg and Shawsville libraries were visited more than 259,000 times. During this time the library checked out over 410,000 books, DVDs and CDs to county citizens. And over 22,000 children, adults and young adults have attended various programs at the different branches of the library. Mr. Hyde believes that the library system reaps substantial return across the county and benefits people of all ages. As a member of the Library Board, and as a property owner and tax payer, Mr. Hyde expressed his support for the proposed budget and considers it a necessary investment in Montgomery County's future.

Connie Fraggatt 1751 Brush Mt. Creek Road, Blacksburg. Ms. Fraggatt is co-president of the Blacksburg High School Parent/Teacher/Student Association. She described herself as a terrible parent because her 16-year old daughter, who is very good with children, would like to someday be a teacher, and she is doing everything she can to discourage her from becoming a teacher and to be an engineer like her parents. She doesn't know of any parents that would want their child to spend the rest of their life struggling to make ends meet. Even with a 12¢ tax increase, Ms. Fraggatt believes our schools are still facing major cuts that could mean totally eliminating programs, deeper cuts in supplies and maintenance, job loss, and even schools closing. She stressed that we cannot afford not to increase the tax rate.

Jim O'Dowd 2431 Mt. Tabor Road, Blacksburg. Mr. O'Dowd identified himself as a strong fiscal conservative who opposed the proposed 12¢ tax increase when he first learned about it through a robo call from the tea party. After investigating the issue, he changed his position and now supports the proposed increase. A 12¢ increase equates to \$216 per year or \$18 per month for a median home value of \$180,000. If Montgomery County wishes to attract young families and businesses to the area and encourage growth, the Board must recognize that the first criteria reviewed by parents is the quality of the local school system. Mr. O'Dowd moved his family here from Denver seven years ago specifically for his children to attend Harding Avenue Elementary, and was horrified to learn that this school may now be at risk of closing due to the gap in funding if the tax increase is not approved. He believes the tax increase is in the long term best interest of the county and its residents.

Valerie Phillips Downing 3850 Field Crest Drive, Riner. She did not sign up to speak tonight, she said what she had to say at the Board's last meeting with a large audience. She reiterated that she supports the tax increase of 12¢ and hopes the Board of Supervisors will also support the increase.

Bill Newcomb 911 Gracelyn Court, Blacksburg. Mr. Newcomb thanked the Board for their services to the county. He expressed his support for the 12¢ tax increase, for a minimum investment in our educational system. Mr. Newcomb's youngest daughter will graduate from Blacksburg High School this year, and she is one of 21,000 applicants for 5,000 freshmen undergraduate positions at Virginia Tech for next year. He pointed out that developing nations all over the world are investing in their education system, they are developing highly skilled technical, manufacturing and service industry personnel right out of their school systems, which makes it imperative, and a community obligation, that we give what our kids need to prepare them to succeed in this world.

Alice Coddington 210 Orchard View Lane, Blacksburg. She opened her remarks with a quote from George Washington, in a letter to George Chapman in December 1784 "The best means of forming a virtuous and happy people will be found in the right education of youth. Without this foundation every other means, in my opinion, must fail". Ms. Coddington has two boys that attend Harding Avenue Elementary School and she supports the proposed 12¢ tax increase. She closed her remarks with a quote from Thomas Jefferson made in a speech in 1804. "An educated citizenry is a vital requisite for our survival as a free people."

Sharon Brockman 710 West Main Street Christiansburg. It is her understanding that 10¢ of the proposed 12¢ tax increase is needed to fund our current debt, which means to her that the Board is 2¢ too high on the proposed rate. She asked what people are expected to give up, one meal, or one trip going out to eat. She is thinking of something trivial like going out to eat, but there are people in the county for whom \$18 or \$20 isn't trivial. She urged the Board to not raise the taxes by 12¢.

Jennifer McDonald 903 Petra Path, Blacksburg, spoke in support of the proposed tax increase. Ms. McDonald said she was really here to talk about two things, return on investment and the passion she has for the public school system. She believes the increase in taxes is going to be a return on investment for our children. Ms. McDonald has spent a lot of time volunteering in the classrooms, and she cannot image taking any more resources away from the students. Education does not deserve to have a short term fix by making budget cuts, we have to look at it as a long time return on investment in our children and our community.

Erma Cox 5861 Piney Woods Road, Riner. Ms. Cox spoke on behalf of agriculture, and the farmers in Montgomery County. She had nothing critical to say about education, she believes it is valuable. She did, however, remind everyone that the nation is deeply in debt and it will come home to bite us all. She brought the Board's attention to the fact that farmers are struggling and barely making ends meet. Farmers do not get cost-of-living raises or holidays, and every time a farmer goes out of business we all lose. It is not fair to put the burden of tax increases on people who are struggling and are already at the poverty line themselves. Farmers need to be able to meet their needs. It may not be all they want, but as families they have to live within their own means and their own budgets, and it's only reasonable that our county government do the same thing. Ms. Cox does not support the proposed 12¢ tax increase.

Jeff Willner 3636 Childress Road, Christiansburg. He thanked the Board of Supervisors for providing the residents of the county a chance to address the proposed property tax rates. Mr. Willner and his wife moved to Montgomery County in 1994 when he took a job at Radford University and bought a house in the Childress area off Route 8. They did not have children at the time, but one of the things that made this area attractive to them and helped to keep them here was the high quality of the education system in the county. A well-educated citizenry benefits everyone, and more specifically we need a well-educated work force if we want to attract high quality good paying jobs to this area and to promote the growth of local entrepreneurs. The proposed tax increase will fund the construction of new schools and help maintain the operating budget of the school system that Mr. Willner believes has been under funded in recent years. He expressed his support for the proposed 12¢ tax increase.

Rick DiSalvo 2805 Heritage Lane, Blacksburg. Mr. DiSalvo works for a consultant in the county and his job includes working with business prospects and showing reasons why they should locate their business in Montgomery County and reasons why that would be the right decision for them. When businesses are looking to locate, one required criteria high on the priority list is a good educational system. He explained that education plays a very important role in long term job creation, and asked that the Board of Supervisors approve the proposed 12¢ tax increase.

Alicia Lloyd 441 Buckskin Road, Blacksburg. As a third grade teacher at Harding Avenue Elementary School, she is very proud of the county's efforts to adhere to national and state requirements while facing tremendous budget cuts. One of her favorite things about Harding Avenue is that it is small and allows closer connections with parents and students. Now, she is suddenly faced with an increase in student to teacher ratio, and may also not have the special ed instruction assistant she needs to help students who may not process information or directions as quickly as others. She is just one person, but she will continue to make a difference for all her students with a quality education. She urged the Board to approve the 12¢ tax increase so Montgomery County can continue to help make a difference and provide the quality education our children deserve.

Ann Hess 70 Crescent Drive, Christiansburg. Ms. Hess announced that she was here tonight because she was absolutely livid last week when she received a robo call asking her to come and protest the work the Board has done in trying to provide services for our people in Montgomery County. She did some checking on the organization and what was going on with the robo call. It was funded by Americans for Prosperity. This is a lobbying group based in Alexandria, Virginia. They have no requirement whatsoever to report to anybody. There is no accountability for how much money they spent for the robo calls, how many calls were made, etc. This is a national lobbying organization coming to Montgomery County, trying to railroad their agenda through, and that makes her absolutely livid. Ms. Hess emphasized that she was here to support

the Board and the hard work they have done to come up with a limited tax increase that was determined to be needed to fund the services in Montgomery County.

Alison Galway 7606 Alleghany Street, Blacksburg. Ms. Galway introduced herself as the director of the adult day care services center on the Virginia Tech campus. She works with people who have Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and other disabilities. Thinking about what our goals are in terms of what we want to have in our county, she doesn't want to live in a place that goes for the lowest common denominator, the sparest lifestyle possible, the least supportive safety net and the minimum possible investment. She would like for the community to not just meet the basic standards but to exceed them, to not live in a community necessarily where all the children are above average, but where at least the average is higher than average. Ms. Galway not only supports the proposed tax increase, but thinks it is too small. She would like for the community to not have to cut back on what is contributed to the community services board, to not have to cut back on what we fund the schools to have them the way they should be. We have growth and progress and if we want to keep up and live in a community that attracts jobs and attracts quality people then we need to pay for it.

Bob Kroeger 405 Cedar Orchard Drive, Blacksburg. Mr. Kroeger addressed the Board about a recent newspaper editorial by Arnie Saari, a former superintendent for Montgomery County Public Schools, about the fact that it has been two years since the collapse of the Blacksburg High School gym roof. During those two years numerous discussions have taken place about whether to repair or build a new school. While the gym roof was the only part of the school to collapse, advocates seized upon the opportunity to push for a new school. Large sums of money were spent for the structural engineering firm to determine if the rest of the building would be safe to house students. The engineering firm and other experts concluded that the building could be made safe for approximately \$15 million which included the \$5.5 million insurance money for a new gym. What a tremendous savings. That was not what the new school zealots wanted to hear. The pressure was intensified to jack up the repair cost so a new school would make financial sense. Even members of the board of supervisors caved in to favor a new building, citing the inflated repair estimates. Site and foundation construction has begun on the new high school and will be in operation in 2013 or 2014. There will be rejoicing and an open house, but the tremendous debt will be unbearable for decades on Montgomery County taxpayers. It should be noted that some citizens who favor the new school will not be living in the county in a few years to pay the bill. Many people, including school employees, were reluctant to speak publicly against excessive spending for a new high school for fear of being labeled anti-education or receiving reprisals from their employers. They are now, however, speaking out against the high tax rates that will be required to pay the mortgage. Their salary increases and perks have now been committed to bricks and mortar. There is no worse time than the present to burden county residents with a tax increase. It is time to suck it up and be content with the finances that are available to the county. Any tax increase will raise havoc with the county and the real estate industry. Real estate investment prices and rents will take a tremendous hit. There still may be time to reconsider the Blacksburg High School decision. Many communities around the country have halted construction of new schools and other government buildings because of financial constraints. The Montgomery County board of supervisors should explore the possibilities of doing the same. In addition to that, in the future it's very possible that most of us, or all of us, may be under the complete control of the United Nations. Have we thought about what may happen if it goes that way?

Barbara Skinner 3583 Laurel Drive, Blacksburg. She previously addressed the Board during this budget cycle, and she repeated her hopes that the Board will support the 8¢ increase in property taxes as suggested by Supervisor Gary Creed, or a maximum of a 10¢ increase. She

made a new request, that funds be made available to provide on-line videos of school board meetings, because citizens need to become more aware of what is going on in our schools. The Council on Foreign Relations has published a new task force report titled "US Education Reform and National Security" and the overview of the report posted on their website begins with "The United States' failure to educate its students leaves them unprepared to compete and threatens the country's ability to drive in a global economy and maintain its leadership role. Educational failure puts the United States future economic prosperity, global position, and physical safety at risk". One of the main recommendations in the report is for our country to launch an effort to hold schools and policy makers accountable for results and to raise public awareness. Ms. Skinner concluded by saying that since 70% of the county's revenue pie goes to school funds and school debt service, she hopes there will be more effort in the future to hold our school system accountable for both spending and quality.

Catherine Kincaid 405 Grandview Drive, Blacksburg. Ms. Kincaid is not against education or teachers, she explained that she used to be a teacher, and also a volunteer at Margaret Beeks Elementary. She believes one of the things that makes education so great is the parents who are interested in the health and welfare of the children. She asked the Board why they decided to build two new schools and remodel a third one with the economy in such bad shape. Bricks and mortar do not produce well educated students, and the county has chosen bricks and mortar over students and teachers and the citizens. People who have been advocating for more and more spending may have moved on to bigger and better things, but those who love this county and want to stay here will be left with the bills. Others will need help, not only senior citizens but young people with families will be hit hard, along with small business owners. When people are losing their jobs and homes, she asked the Board why they can't find a way to cut unnecessary spending. She offered to lend a book she has by Dave Ramsey "The Total Money Makeover" to anyone who may be interested.

Julia Lewis 1173 Oakland Square, Blacksburg. Ms. Lewis pointed out that Americans for Prosperity is a lobbying organization that was created by the millionaire Koch brothers. While she realizes things are tough and no one, including herself, wants to pay more taxes; on the other hand, she really wants the services. She would hate to see the sheriff's department shut down, our libraries shut down, our schools shut down, so she supports the 12¢ tax increase.

Roger Lewis 1173 Oakland Square, Blacksburg. At Mr. Lewis' request, his wife read his statement into the record. "I believe members of the board of supervisors and members of the school board and their staffs have worked very hard to come up with an acceptable budget in a time of economic stress, crushing capital needs and delay in knowing what state revenues will be forthcoming. Before the next budget cycle, I urge the two boards to begin here a one or two day open conference to present known problems ahead and to seek out ideas from the public. The conference should bring together some key legislators, executive branch officials, and representatives of counties and cities school districts, and state wide organizations representing those groups. Some suggested topics:

- Will a 1¢ increase in the state income tax take pressure off the real property tax?
- As residential housing properties drop in value does this mean than more and more families may be going into what may be hidden welfare, because their property taxes cover less and less of school costs, forcing the community at large to support them?
- Is it time to shrink the Dillon Rule, but require general assembly approval of what counties, towns and school districts may or may not do. No matter how admirable.

-Should a municipality such as Blacksburg consider both gaming and learning facility to create jobs and pull in outside money. Something that our nearby West Virginia neighbors are doing.

-Should we try to step up two way student exchange efforts so our youngsters and beyond can understand foreign languages, cultures and business practices.

We Americans are a quarrelsome lot and it is a wonder we get along as well as we do. It's well sometimes to recall the famous words of Winston Churchill 'democracy is the worst possible type of government, except for all others'."

Doug Chancey 2068 Lusters Gate Road, Blacksburg, Montgomery County. Mr. Chancey said he would like to address all those in favor of the tax increase and ask that they continue to not clap after each endorsement for the tax increase and not stoop to the rude behavior of the people who oppose the tax increase. The Chairman asked that Mr. Chancey please address his remarks to the Board. Mr. Chancey congratulated the gentleman that had the child graduate from Blacksburg High School but reminded him that his child graduated from the middle school because there is no Blacksburg high school. When the gym roof collapsed, as a former welder he knew right away that it was a shoddy welding, and he believes this is the case in many other buildings around the county. He asked what we were all going to do to help the children in the future have the quality of life that we have known, which has been good for most people. He has compassion for the farmer who spoke, and he believes there is a way that the 12¢ tax increase can be applied to the very wealthy in the county. For example, if a person makes more than \$500,000 let them pay 20¢ on the dollar, and if you make under \$25,000 maybe you're exempt, and certainly let the teachers be exempt. He wants to see the students staying in Montgomery County and new industries coming here, and people having a quality life. Mr. Chancey believes the folks who oppose the tax increase are mean spirited and narcissistic and are not looking to seven generations in the future.

Kelly Pleasant 2737 Old Fort Road, Blacksburg. Ms. Pleasant introduced herself as president of the Montgomery County Education Association, and expressed her support for the proposed 12¢ tax increase even though a tax increase affects her colleagues, members of her association, her neighbors, and her own household. While some are saying that raising the tax rate is unfair and irresponsible, she contends that it is irresponsible to continually underfund county services. It is unfortunate that the state has not yet fully funded their obligation to Virginia's public schools. It is shameful that the localities are expected to pick up the deficit left by that continued under funding. It is an inequity that localities such as Montgomery County have no taxing recourse other than raising property taxes. It is further shameful that the VRS has been raided for years and now the Governor wants it to be refunded on the backs of localities that didn't create the shortages. Somehow, public education has become a scapegoat, something to blame for economic problems in the county, in the state, and nationwide. Teachers are expected to contend with high stakes testing and additional responsibilities daily while fielding criticism from people not associated with education and who are many years removed from the class room themselves. We are education professionals, highly qualified, and uniquely trained to teach the students of Montgomery County. She said they will not apologize for requesting cost of living increases in their salary or for their benefits, and public education is not the problem, it is the solution. Buses need to be bought, schools need to be built, technology must be upgraded to educate students in 2012 and beyond, and she urged the Board to approve the proposed 12¢ tax increase.

Erin Bull 2703 Chelsea Court, Blacksburg. Ms. Bull thanked the Board of Supervisor for their support for education. With the state reducing funds the last few years, the schools would not have the quality education system they have today without the Board's support. Ms. Bull spoke in support of the proposed 12¢ tax increase because it is needed to maintain our quality system of education. Even with the 12¢ increase, she believes the schools will have to cut things that are drastically needed. When Board members were campaigning before the last election, all the candidates were for education, several said they wanted to know about how much funding the school system needed to be adequately funded. So this year the school board sent the board of supervisors a needs based budget. Our county needs to construct two high schools and repair buildings because students want safe schools to attend. Montgomery County needs to fairly compensate its employees to attract and retain the quality educators who are responsible for training our students for the future.

Angie Cornett Blankenship Road, Shawsville. Ms. Cornett is a teacher at Eastern Montgomery Elementary and stated she was here tonight to request the Board to vote in favor of the 12¢ tax increase. This would allow the school division the funding needed to provide a high quality education for our students. The tools they need to be successful grow in complexity each year, and it is the schools' responsibility to help make them effective and productive citizens of the global community. She encouraged the Board and the community to not view our jobs and responsibilities as a burden but rather an opportunity and an investment in our future. She believes the 12¢ tax increase is only a stop gap measure, that more is needed to do what is best for the kids. Teachers are willing to sacrifice to provide students with a quality education. They are over worked and under paid, and they are continually asked to do more with less. They are asking the community to sacrifice the way they do, gladly. She explained that the positions that were paid for with stimulus funds reflect where their true need is, which for her school is tutors and instructional specialists to provide small group or individual targeted instruction and intervention to the neediest children. Ms. Cornett is concerned that the community misunderstands how our schools are funded. She explained that the main provision for raising revenue is through property taxes. She asked that the distribution of funds demonstrate that public education in Montgomery County is our number one priority, and asked that the Board of Supervisors approve the proposed 12¢ tax increase.

Regina Vassar 1731 Big Spring Drive, Elliston. Ms. Vassar stated that she and her husband are retired and came here to live in the mountains in a very quiet, peaceful atmosphere, and they live on a very small income. She pointed out that everyone here is talking about money, that they want more money, they want better schools, they deserve this or that. She asked what she deserved as a senior, to live, to pay her insurance, to buy her medicine, and she cannot do this if she has to pay higher taxes. She does not understand why so many schools have to be built, one has to be remodeled and a new courthouse being built. With the cost of food doubling, increasing costs for heating oil, water, power and with the cost of gasoline going up, she and her husband cannot afford to go anywhere. She suggested there may be too much conflict of interest on the board of supervisors. They seem to favor what is best for others and forget about the retirees. Although she did not have a quote from a great dead president, she said she would quote from someone with more clout, her Mother, who said "if you can't afford it, you can't have it".

Steve Fijalkowshi 2557 Mt. Pleasant Road, Shawsville. Mr. Fijalkowshi asked the Board not to exceed a 10¢ tax increase. He realizes that we have to service the enormous debt incurred in building two high schools, especially the one in Blacksburg, which is a debt that could have been put off by rebuilding the old high school. Although we have many new or fairly new schools in Montgomery County, this does not seem to be enough for the school board and he believes they

have much to prove to the taxpayers when it comes to being good stewards of our money. He used as an example, the \$1.5 million that was given to them for buses and computers and apparently they reconsidered and decided to give bonuses to employees instead. This does not build confidence in their decisions, especially when more money has been requested in this year's budget. In view of these concerns, Mr. Fijalkowshi suggested they look deeper into where they can cut back on programs that aren't working or underutilized. Our teachers deserve an across the board pay raise, but during a time when other county employees are not receiving anything, how can this be justified? He also thinks a considerable amount of money can be saved when building schools by making them functional instead of the elaborate ones he has seen lately. He asked the Board of Supervisors to be responsible and hold fast until more revenue sources can be found, that many people are tired of hearing that the students will suffer from lack of this program or that program, or that we won't be able to attract quality teachers, or even lose the quality teachers that we already have. He doesn't believe many teachers will leave because of pay, but he has heard numerous people say that they would move into neighboring counties where the tax rate is lower. Like the majority of citizens negatively impacted by an increase, he would have no tax relief through the county because he does not fit the criteria required for tax relief. The Board needs to only raise the taxes enough to cover what is needed and not what is wanted.

Robbie Jones 996 Coal Hollow Road, Christiansburg. Ms. Jones stated that she has attended several meetings and now feels like it is the time to speak. She is employed by the Montgomery County Public Schools as a custodian and is the vice president of the Montgomery County Education Association. Ms. Jones affirmed that MCPS not only has dedicated teachers, the school system consists of bus drivers, maintenance workers, cafeteria workers, custodians, administrative assistants, nurses and teaching assistants, and they are all educators. To help everyone understand a typical 8-hour shift for a custodian in the school system she shared the following scenario-imagine cleaning your home while lots of visitors are coming and going and imagine cleaning from 25,000 to 40,000 square feet per night. And if that's divided by eight hours that means a custodian will clean 3,000 to 5,000 square feet per hour. In researching this issue, she found that a custodian that has worked for the school system for 12 years, now makes \$525 more than the Virginia family median income in 1984. With that said, Ms. Jones supported the proposed 12¢ tax increase.

Mary Houska 2301 Spring Hollow Lane, Blacksburg. Ms. Houska has lived in Montgomery County for forty-nine years, and noted that she was speaking as president of the League of Women Voters. She was one of the citizens who received a call from the Americans for Prosperity, a national political action committee based in northern Virginia, and sponsored robo calls to the citizens of Montgomery County telling them to attend this meeting and oppose any increase in the county tax rate. This organization does not have to register in Virginia as lobbyists, nor does it have to report how it spends its money, or the source of its money. Its board chairman is David Cox, a resident of New York City. According to the website, eliminating a tax increase in Montgomery County is a project of its Virginia affiliate. The League of Women Voters strongly opposes such political action committees. Montgomery County tax rates are the business of the citizens of Montgomery County and the Board of Supervisors. We have citizens who want a very large increase in property taxes, and we have citizens with a low income for whom any tax increase will be very difficult. The League of Women Voters sees the recommended budget and tax rate as a viable compromise in these difficult times.

Barbara Middleton 1535 Diana Drive, Christiansburg. Ms. Middleton addressed the Board about the hardship a tax increase will place on some taxpayers. She spoke of the lady who talked about advising her daughter not to become a teacher because of the low pay and the hard work. Ms. Middleton explained that she herself is a teacher and has taught in Montgomery County for 30 years. She knew this was a low paying job, she went into this field because she loves teaching. She expressed her support for teachers and a better education for the children of Montgomery County. She also emphasized that this tax increase would definitely place many people in a difficult position. She has also been hearing that elderly people are anti-education, and she emphatically pointed out that they are not. But this tax increase will not only affect the elderly, it will also affect the middle class, the middle aged, and the younger couples that are raising a family and are really having a tough time right now. It seems like our governments, local, state and even higher up, want to spend now and worry later, with no idea of where the money is coming from, and the burden cannot continue to be placed on the taxpayers of Montgomery County. Ms. Middleton related the personal experience of her daughter and son-in-law who have been out of jobs for the past two years because of downsizing and closing of plants, and it has been very difficult for them keeping up with the rising costs of food, gas, utilities, etc. With this in mind, she stressed that anything the Board can do to lower the tax increase as much as possible would certainly benefit everyone in Montgomery County.

Dave Sisson 1720 Big Spring Drive, Elliston. Mr. Sisson was born in Montgomery County and attended elementary and high school here. He also attended Virginia Tech and has been a teacher and a principal and is pro education. However, he does not support the proposed increase in the tax rate and called the Board's attention to the fact that it is actually a 16% real estate tax increase on the current rate. This is necessary primarily because the Board voted to build a \$52 million school when it could have remodeled for less than \$20 million. He is not against the teachers, he knows the teachers don't make as much as they deserve and they work very hard and put up with parents that don't care and kids that don't care and sometimes principals that don't care. As mentioned earlier in this meeting, the superintendent came before the Board and asked for \$1.5 million for new computers and buses and only \$300,000 of that money was applied to those computers and zero to buses. Where is the accountability? His question is not so much about the increase, but where is the line item budget that should be presented to the school board by the school administration so they know where the monies are being spent so it will not be necessary to raise taxes. A good education is not always equated with new buildings and new buses and new computers, but teachers and parents who care enough to make the students be what they should be. He asked the Board not to approve the 16% tax rate increase.

Vicki Kitts 310 Gold Leaf Drive, Christiansburg. Ms. Kitts was born and raised here, and still lives and works here. Her dad, as well as the other dads and moms of the kids that grew up here, paid taxes so we could all benefit from the services those taxes provided when she was a child, including education, law enforcement protection, roads, and all the other services that our taxes support. It was our time then when we were children and we knew that people cared about us. We knew that the teacher would be there when we got there, we knew that the police officer was around and would protect us in time of need. Ms. Kitts stated that she is a land owner now and a teacher; she owns farm land in the agricultural district in Riner. She would gladly pay the 12¢ increase and more, because this increase will benefit all of us and all of us expect to receive services. A 12 ¢ increase is the right thing to do in tough times when tough decisions have to be made. She asked that the Board please consider that the quality of life will improve with continued and uninterrupted services, especially the children. Consider it their time now.

Brandon Roop 3050 Mockorange Drive, Blacksburg. Mr. Roop announced that he would like to deal with something a bit different tonight. Putting aside whether you support the tax increase or whether you don't, as much money has been frittered away, what good is 2¢ or 10¢ or whatever. He reminded the Board of what he called an altercation during a previous meeting that Mr. Creed had with another board member. The Chair reminded Mr. Roop that everyone was here to address the tax issue. Mr. Roop continued, saying that another Board member asked for a 24¢ increase and that brought up the issue of the schools saying before that they needed \$1.5 million for buses and computers and some was spent on the computers but nothing was spent on buses. Mr. Roop stated that if he asked his employer for \$1.5 million, or \$100,000 to do something at work, maybe to benefit the building or something, and he didn't do what he said he would, not only would he be fired, but he's pretty sure he would be brought up on fraud charges, grand thief larceny, on top of being sued. So where is the accountability? According to a local paper, every 1¢ tax increase is \$700,000. So that \$1.5 million was more than 2¢ frittered away, so what's the point? If we don't have any responsibility as to what we're spending it on why are we raising taxes, period.

James Wesel 604 Fairview Avenue, Blacksburg. Mr. Wesel spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. To commit the county to \$125 million in capital expenditures would be best suited for a referendum where it is actually put out to the voters so that everybody gets a chance to voice their opinion. He also questioned the timing of the public hearing, scheduled for 6:00 p.m., when they are normally at 7:30 and that may have been to clear everyone out by 10 p.m.; however, people who don't get off work until 5:00 p.m. and then have to drive a half hour or more, don't get the opportunity to come and get their name on the list to speak and he believes that gives an unfair advantage to those who leave work at 3:30 in the afternoon. What is being done basically, is that we are increasing school budgets, we are increasing county budgets, when everybody else is getting by on less. He spoke of his 89-year old mother who owns a small house in Blacksburg and \$18 a month is a huge deal to her. It is important to everyone that is on a fixed income. He summarized by saying that when new schools are going to be built that it would be appropriate to take to a referendum, to have your vote count, to have your voices heard.

Roger Woody 1285 Tranquility, Christiansburg. A banker who came into his office recently talked about people who have already had to use their savings and are getting into their retirement and don't know what they will do next. He doesn't believe the Board of Supervisors thought this through, about how it is going to affect people and how it is going to hurt this county on growth and people losing their homes. He is not against education and doesn't believe this county has ever suffered for education. Buildings do not teach kids, the teachers do. The school over in Blacksburg could have been repaired, and he questioned how much of a tax increase is really needed; that it should have been taken to the people to decide. Mr. Woody declared that he is not with the Tea Party, but speaking from his heart. He advised that the contract for the school construction can be broken. It's the same as if you came to him and wanted to buy a house and he does a contract with you and then the bank doesn't give you the money, then he would have to re-sell. When other counties in the area are struggling to come up with a million dollars, look what our Board is coming up with. Also, a lot of the people here tonight are not going to be here in 4 or 5 years so they don't care. And the teachers don't realize it, but they are not going to be able to get a raise because the money is going to be gone, and they can't get a raise unless the taxes are raised again.

Doug Proffit 125 Corbin Drive, Shawsville. Mr. Proffit said he was born in Christiansburg 69 years ago and has watched the area grow and evolve over the years. Of all the property that is being developed in this area during the past fifteen years, in the Riner area, out toward Blacksburg, out on 114, many of them by Mr. Woody, who has probably developed more

property than anyone that's ever been in Montgomery County, and contributed more to the tax base than anyone in this county. He has never once heard anyone say what a difference that makes in the tax revenue we receive. Mr. Proffit is concerned about the senior citizens. He realizes we have to educate our kids, but we have more people in Montgomery County than just those who are 5-18 years old. We have senior citizens and we have young families. Mr. Proffit bought his house when he was 28 years old for \$15,300 and the same house in 2008 sold for \$153,000. That's called inflation, and that's what has happened in America and in Montgomery County. This country has generated more debt in the past 11 years than we generated in the previous 225 years. Mr. Proffit has dealt in the grocery/food business for 54 years and he has watched senior citizens come into the store where he works, and they struggle to pay for their groceries. They are caught in a position where they have too much money to qualify for help and too poor to survive. This \$18 would be critical for them. If you take \$18 away from the senior citizens, then you're giving it to someone else. If anyone gets a raise, it has to be taken from someone else. Mr. Proffit quoted Karl Marx who said many years ago "I have no desire to attempt to destroy the United States of America. Leave her alone, and she will destroy herself".

Randolph Vaden 4917 Four Wheel Drive, Blacksburg. Mr. Vaden has lived in Montgomery County for 67 years. He is one of 13 children and he and his wife have raised six children and they all graduated from Blacksburg High School, and the youngest one just graduated from college. She graduated from Virginia Tech with a master's degree with the intent of becoming a teacher in Montgomery County, but she has not been able to realize her dream simply because of misappropriation of the tax dollars in Montgomery County. She lives on a road that will not handle a school bus which is right here on the outskirts of Blacksburg and Christiansburg so she has to take her children to school every morning and pick them up every afternoon. There are more things in Montgomery County than just education, the Board of Supervisors is responsible for directing the money that the state appropriates for our roads, and if we cannot get some of our roads fixed this is misappropriation of money. When we put the money that we have into parks and recreation, which is nice but that is a want. Roads are a need. When we put money into our libraries, that is a want. Mr. Vaden believes that if a majority of Montgomery County citizens were here tonight we would find that most of us are against any tax increase at this time. We need to put our needs before our wants.

Phyllis Albritton 1003 Highland Circle, Blacksburg. A member of the Montgomery County School Board, Ms. Albritton thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak. She stated that Virginia is the 6th wealthiest state in the nation in per capita income, and yet our school funding will be cut because the composite index went up for Montgomery County. Ms. Albritton expressed her support for the proposed 12¢ tax increase to meet the needs of our community. She also expressed her disappointment about the robo calls that have been coming to Montgomery County. Ms. Albritton explained that the organization Americans for Prosperity is funded by the Koch brothers, whose fortune started in the Soviet Union when their grandfather laid gas pipelines for the Soviet Union in the 1920's and 1930's. It's very painful for her because her parents were immigrants, and her grandfather was forced out of the communist country because he would not support them. The Koch brothers support the Cato Institute, which is for privatizing our education, and it disheartens her to see that money started with the communists is now supporting this energy and effort to get people to come to you through a robo call to say let's not raise the taxes. Several people have told Ms. Albritton about people in the community who could use the lower taxes but are too proud to come forward, and if she could talk to these people she would tell them that they have given to this community all their lives and now let us give back to them. Over the years the demands on our public schools have increased, and probably for the good, because it helps our poorest. Those are the children whose parents don't put food in their mouths, who don't read to them, who don't have a structure and love and

limits, which they do get in a public school. Montgomery County is blessed with all the programs available in our school system, such as the music program. She provided copies of the 2012 All-County Band Program that was held on March 27th with participants from all the County's high schools and middle schools. She went on to say that she is grateful for everything the people in our school system do for us, and our public libraries, our sheriff's department and our social services, and encouraged the Board to adopt the 12¢ tax increase so we can have the best for our community.

Brad Hill 3855 Eagle Country Drive, Riner. According to Mr. Hill, tonight isn't about a 12¢ tax increase, it's about doing what is right. He reminded the Board that over a year ago it was decided to move forward on building two high schools and renovating a middle school and the Board knew at that time that it would cause a big jump in the real estate tax rate. Not only are we looking at an increase that was approved by the Board of Supervisors, but we are also looking at losing funds from the state, which he believes accounts for 3¢ of the 12¢ proposed tax increase. He asked that the Board make up the difference in the loss of state revenue and continue on their path that was put forth more than a year ago. Mr. Hill pointed out that the schools' proposed budget is actually less for next year than it is this year. However, it is not only the schools that take a hit when advertised rates are lowered, all county services have to make cuts. One of the major issues is how our budget is funded and he encouraged the Board to seek as many avenues as possible for raising funds to help support and better our county. Until that time, Mr. Hill indicated that he would accept his responsibility and support the proposed 12¢ tax increase.

Mike O'Sullivan 11700-H Cardinal Court, Blacksburg. Mr. O'Sullivan introduced himself as a proud member of Occupy Blacksburg. Because of the contention here tonight and different viewpoints, he asked that one thing be recognized, and that is the budget situation with our schools right now is due to the tremendous cuts to education funding from the state level. The state is cutting funds for education at the same time it is giving various tax breaks. He suggested the Board look at a report from the Joint Legislative Audit Review Committee (JLARC) a committee commissioned by our legislator to audit various state budget issues. JLARC recently reported on a study of the effectiveness of tax breaks, and they were very critical of the effectiveness of tax breaks, and they were very critical of the effectiveness of many tax breaks that are going to large corporations. He urged the members of the Board to go to Richmond and talk to our legislators about the JLARC report, and ask them to address the issue of cutting funding to localities while simultaneously giving away money ineffectively in other places.

Starflower O'Sullivan 11700-H Cardinal Court, Blacksburg. Ms. O'Sullivan introduced herself as a member of Occupy Blacksburg and voiced her commitment to funding for public education. She believes a budget reflects our county's values and she wants a budget that values equality and opportunity for all of us. She does not have children nor does she have a great deal of money, but she has been a citizen of Montgomery County for over thirty years. The schools' budget request for an additional \$3 million for the operating budget is to compensate for the reduced revenue from the state, bringing their budget to the same level as last year. According to the schools' website, if this budget is approved by the Board of Supervisors, the schools will still face difficulty balancing how to maintain the quality education in Montgomery County while dealing with increased expenses mandated by the state. Ms. O'Sullivan explained that the decision the Board of Supervisors makes will affect every person in the County. The quality of education in our county will affect not only our children, but each and every person in the County because the quality of our schools and our teachers helps determine the quality of professionals and workers that our county will attract, which employers may locate here, the jobs that will be available, and ultimately the money each individual and business will make. She

hopes the budget will reflect the responsibility to our community and to our children by supporting the funding of public education.

Andrew Mike 209 Tee Street, Apt. 10, Blacksburg. Mr. Mike introduced himself as a member of Occupy Blacksburg, and commended the Board for having the dedication to stick it out tonight. He stated that he would like to express his embarrassment for some of his fellow citizens in the room for their lack of decorum. He spoke of his support for the proposed 12¢ tax increase, that it is vital for the funding of public schools. The budget proposed by the school board is a needs based budget. He said he was astonished when someone here mentioned that the school system in this county was run with 2/3 of the funds needed to fund Albemarle County because he was in Albemarle County public schools and he knew how bad they were and it's actually amazing that the school system in this county manages to thrive with less. He suggested that the school system be commended for that, and not ridiculed. He heard a couple of people from the other side say that we need raises for teachers, why are you building these buildings, and he agrees with them that we need raises for teachers, we need a larger tax increase to do it, but they keep opposing taxes. If the Board increases the tax rate the schools will be funded to such a degree that nothing will collapse. And if the taxes aren't increased they're not going to stop there. Americans for Prosperity and the Tea Party won't stop there, they want to keep cutting taxes, they want privatization of schools, they want to eliminate government, they think that government has no place in American society. If this were put to referendum, we may find that people want a government, including good public schools and that they would be willing to come up with the taxes needed to pay for them. The Board of Supervisors was elected to make the right decision, the right decision for the schools and the right decision to stand up to bullies like Americans for Prosperity and the Tea Party.

Rick Weaver 3475 Eaglebrook in Christiansburg. The Board has heard that Americans for Prosperity (AFP) was started by, and receives large funding from oil industry giants, including the Koch family, and Mr. Weaver informed everyone that the AFP and the Tea Party have a pretty close relationship, noting that they have issued joint press releases about Montgomery County's proposed tax increase. The question he would ask the Board to ponder is, of all the things that have been heard tonight from all the different groups and all the different speakers, how many of the Koch children attend school in Montgomery County? Which of the major contributors to the AFP pay taxes in Montgomery County? And what exactly is their interest in the property tax rate in Montgomery County? It was once said that all politics is local. His fear is that all politics is becoming national. Mr. Weaver asked that the Board remember who their constituents are and to deliberate and make decisions based on what is best for Montgomery County, not what is best for the Koch family. Mr. Weaver supports the proposed 12¢ tax increase to benefit our community and our schools.

Clark Webb P.O. Box 863, Blacksburg. Mr. Webb spoke in support of the proposed 12¢ tax increase. He quoted a front page story in the *News Messenger* "Survey says quality of life excellent or good in Montgomery County". With good press like this we can expect Montgomery County to have a higher profile as a destination for people to locate, so what we're trying to prepare for is the future and 12¢ is the minimum of what we need to ensure a good future for all of our children. Mr. Webb pointed out that the County has a tax relief program for those who are unable to pay property taxes, and suggested that it be given a higher profile and perhaps increase the amount of the tax relief so the burden doesn't fall so hard on those who are least able to afford it.

Dale Wimberley 1471 Crestview Drive, Blacksburg. Speaking in support of the proposed 12¢ tax increase, Mr. Wimberley told the Board that although his two children have graduated from Montgomery County public schools, he still lives here and the kind of public schools we have affect him and everyone else who lives here. When he hears the Americans for Prosperity and others attach school spending, and other government spending, he is reminded of a political cartoon in which a man picks up a magic tea pot, a genie comes out and the man wishes for no taxes and interfering government. The genie grants his wish and the man opens his eyes to see a big sign that says “welcome to Somalia”. The cartoon exaggerates but it makes a powerful point. When a nation’s people can’t or won’t cooperate to invest in the future they end up with a miserable future. He asked those who oppose the proposed tax increase to reconsider their position because the county public schools benefit them as much, or more, than they benefit him.

Jack Selcovitz 2000 High Rock Hill Road, Pilot. Mr. Selcovitz spoke in opposition to the proposed 12¢ tax increase saying the Board of Supervisors is responsible for creating the financial chaos by incurring debt without asking the taxpayers, through referendum, to vote on assuming this debt. The Board acted on its own to take on the debt, and now the citizens have to pay the price. The proposed budget indicates there is \$3,488,000 in year-end reserve funds. Mr. Selcovitz asked why we aren’t using those funds to diminish the debt. In concert with the \$1.7 million growth from last year, this would cover one half of the debt service increase. There is \$1 million allocated for a rainy day fund, Mr. Selcovitz believes a collapsed roof would qualify as a rainy day event. Should the economy pick up, we can start to replenish those reserves next year. These measures would diminish the increase by 5¢, necessitating only a 7¢ increase. He asked everyone to remember that when a business has its real estate taxes raised, it must pass on those increases to its customers just to survive. The taxpayer gets hit, not just at home, but every time they go to a store or a restaurant. The taxes have a negative impact on shopping purchases, which in turn reduces sales tax revenues. It is the Board of Supervisors’ fiduciary responsibility to maintain proper fiscal management of our county budget, including the mass amounts going to the school system. To dispense over \$91 million to a school system and then hear employees report having to purchase classroom items and hearing reports of major building repairs indicates there’s flawed priorities in the schools’ budget. He asked that the Board reduce the proposed tax increase to 7¢.

Bill Murray 401 Givens Lane, Blacksburg. Mr. Murray stated that the proposed tax increase is not about education or the schools, it is about servicing the debt, and there’s even the question of whether the money can be collected because people have the option of leaving and those that can’t pay the taxes could easily leave and go to a neighboring county that has a lower rate and a similar life style as they have now. The debt incurred was avoidable if the schools had been properly maintained. He called the Board’s attention to the issue about money that was allocated for buses last year but no buses were purchased. When you postpone buying the buses it increases the cost and shows up in the budget every year. Mr. Murray is confident that a referendum on the bond issue would not have passed. Even though our median income may be \$65,000 there are many families and persons with disabilities whose annual income is less than \$12,000. \$20 a month increase in real estate taxes may not be much for some, but it is a significant amount of money for a number of people. The tax relief program only applies to people who own real estate, it does not apply to renters. The landlords will raise the rent to cover the cost of the tax increase. The students living in apartments will try and save money on their rent by packing more kids in one apartment and then we’re dealing with code enforcement issues. He asked the Board to keep in mind that raising taxes will hurt more people than it will help.

Tammy Martin 1733 White Oak Lane, Christiansburg. Ms. Martin has lived in Montgomery County for 45 years and her family lives in Montgomery County. Her brother owns a business in Blacksburg and a business in Christiansburg. She conveyed her respect to the members of the Board for all they do for the community, but she spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase, citing the hardship it will create for many people who may be forced to move out of the county. She thanked the Board for taking the time to listen.

Bruce Cunningham 1515 Red Hawk Run, Blacksburg. Mr. Cunningham spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase, basically because of the current state of the economy. He believes a tax increase would cause hardship on people that are delinquent, or would increase the delinquency rate. The projected 6.5% increase in sales tax revenue could be in jeopardy because of more money being spent on debt. It is irresponsible of the state to not adopt a budget, which places a burden on the county. Unfortunately, we have too many politicians and not enough statesmen in Richmond to do the right thing. He suggested that the Board not make a decision on the tax rate until we find out how much revenue will be coming from the state.

A. Paul Thomas 875 Mt. View Drive. Mr. Thomas said he was reluctant to give his address, society nowadays is such that one is warned don't give out your personal data to anybody, and there may be a stranger in here whom I wouldn't like to be known about. He knows the marvelous endeavor of this county to provide public education for its citizens is to the benefit of everyone. However, is not this effort now going beyond good discretion as to be scholastically needed. When you remember those who must pay for it and their ability to pay, one questions such an increase. To some it might be feasible to have for the coming year alone. But we all know the increase will be permanent and in years to come will be the foundation for further increases yet to come. And then there's the further increase, natural and hypothetically inflated from reassessment, to the value of peoples' dwellings and land. This is a time of economic cut backs and the school system of the county not finding means also to cut back. How about for example, in school athletics, inter-school sports which are not germanely scholastic. He suggested that all read Mr. Saari's recent comments published in the newspaper, pertinent to a new Blacksburg high school to replace one, which was new only 35 years ago. Shouldn't its lifetime, with some repairs, have been twice that number of years? He asked, couldn't we have devised and entered into the curriculum required courses in the building of good character. What constitutes good character? What are the components of good personal character? And how are they recognized and developed? The goal of such a curriculum would be to have an ethically minded people. He loved the fact that Mr. Jefferson had been referred to several times. The Chair informed Mr. Thomas that his time was up.

David D. Guy, Sr. 205 Wooden Shoe Court, Christiansburg. Mr. Guy introduced himself as a resident, taxpayer, registered voter, veteran and an engineer. He supports teachers, his daughter is a teacher and his son-in-law is a teacher. His daughter is not teaching now because of stress on the job. He explained that other school boards in this country and county boards of supervisors have alternate ways of providing classrooms for education. Harvard University Childhood Center, Newman Elementary in Needham, Massachusetts have built handsome, functional classrooms with state-of-the-art equipment. They built 30 modular classrooms in 60 days. Thirty of those classrooms were connected with a corridor, at a fraction of the cost. Mr. Guy has two grandchildren, ages 5 and 2. The 5-year old has been going to school for two years, he goes to Calvary Classical. He knows his letters, his sounds, he memorizes things in a play. He knows Psalm 23. Mr. Guy's 5th grade teacher taught him Psalm 23 back when the schools were allowed to teach those things. So why are two school teachers not placing their child in public school? They thought, where do I put my child to give him the best education. They had a choice to make and it costs them thousands of dollars a year, and they pay taxes. Mr. Guy

emphasized that he supports the teachers, but he does not support the buildings as proposed because there are alternatives. He asked if anyone knew the biggest purchaser of U.S. treasury bills—he answered that is the U.S. government, we are buying our own debt. How long can you buy your own debt and survive.

Carl Pauli 580 Dee Dee Drive, Christiansburg. Mr. Pauli has been a Montgomery County resident for over thirty years, and an employee of Montgomery County public schools for more than twenty years. His children are students at CHS and CMS and the family is very pleased with the quality education they have received in this school district. Mr. Pauli said he supported the proposed 12¢ tax increase necessary to fund the construction of our new schools and to bring funding of the school division's operating budget up to 2011-2012 levels. The Board of Supervisors made a commitment to support the building of our new schools. He reminded them to honor this commitment and ensure that the funds are available to see these projects to completion. Even though he has not had a salary increase in three years, his health insurance premiums continue to go up and he already pays \$10,000 for that, while his benefits become less, he is willing to have his taxes increased for the benefit of our public schools, because he understands how important the continuation of a quality public education is to our community and to our country. He understands it will be difficult for all of us to pay additional taxes in our current economic times; however, it is his hope that they will come to realize the importance of having a well-supported public education system that is not seen as an enemy to the very people it serves and that all citizens will understand that they must pay for its continued existence.

Kenny Lancaster 904 Radford Street, Christiansburg. Mr. Lancaster maintained that this 12¢ tax increase is not needed. He owns property in different areas of Montgomery County and he is not willing to pay the proposed increase. He was born and raised in Montgomery County and has owned property here for approximately forty-five years, including quite a few pieces of rental property. He also owns property in Floyd County. He said people are tired of stuff being crammed down their throat and he is at the point where he is ready to move out of Montgomery County and go to Floyd County.

Tom Zuckewar Fieldcrest Drive, Riner. Mr. Zuckewar was unable to attend tonight's meeting and asked that his statement be read into the record. "I'm a parent of school aged children, e-commerce entrepreneur, realtor with Long and Foster in Blacksburg, and most importantly, a taxpayer and property owner in Montgomery County. I've become increasingly concerned about the possibility that is commonly referred to as a "downward death spiral" in school, sheriff, and county operations. In the 1950's and 60's, Howard Johnson Hotels was the largest single operator of lodging facilities and restaurants across the United States. In fact, at one point they had more restaurants – and greater sales – than McDonald's. Today the restaurants barely exist and the hotel chain ranks among the lowest tiers of price, amenities, and service. So how could a once business powerhouse become such a failure? During the oil embargo of the 70's they stopped investing in their properties, they stopped investing in their people, they stopped investing in their products, and they began to cut costs rampantly. They cut quality. They cut staff. They cut investment. They cut everything they could until the operation was really nothing more than a skeleton of its former self. One round of cuts lead to another and to less talent, to reduced quality, to a lower competitive advantage, to outdated buildings, to old technology, to a loss of innovation and continuous improvement, and ultimately to their downfall. The same can be said for other businesses and organizations across the U.S. It's really a simple economic principle – when you want to grow a business, you invest in people, plants, and machinery. Period. When you want to "harvest" profits for a few years before closing up shop, you cut costs, you cut people, you cut quality, and you squeeze what you can from what lies behind. There are many parallels to the world of public education and public service. For a

decade, the school system and sheriff's department have "gotten by" on a shoe string budget. It's always been a tradeoff of buildings, people, or equipment – but never a consolidated approach to invest in unison. There's always been other priorities – in good times and in bad. Today's budget challenge, in particular, seems to be compounded by a tremendous amount of misinformation. I was wearing an "invest in education" button at the grocery store the other day. The lady behind me said "I wish those schools would quit wasting all that money". When I inquired to what exactly she was referring, she told me that she heard bus drivers got paid \$70,000 annually. It simply is just not true and I'm suspicious of how such examples can get so wildly exaggerated? Local anti-tax organizations would have the public believe that is rampant spending out of control. The fact is the Commonwealth of Virginia has changed the allocation model for municipal school funding – tax dollars that used to come from Richmond must now come from local real estate taxes. I've recently noticed that the Shelor Motor Mile is investing in a new showroom building. A building alone cannot sell cars, but I'm fairly confident that Shelor's leadership will invest in people, equipment, and technology to make their new building a quality, reputable, and in demand operation. Tonight's vote on county funding for schools and other operations is just the same. We can make investments that build better and safer communities and lead to better schools and better jobs, or we can cut to the core and long for better days. Howard Johnson's was once a great company. Unfortunately, it's no longer 1960 and the ramifications of today's decision will affect us for many, many years. I vote for investing."

Jennifer Mengel 4520 Blue Heron Drive, Riner. Ms. Mengel addressed the Board, saying she believes she has learned a lot about this process over the last two years since we've been talking about the school construction projects, and in the beginning she was an advocate for repairing Blacksburg High School, and a large reason for that was because she thought that was an alternative and would help with some of the tax burden on our citizens. After months of listening to experts and different meetings and hours and hours of going through all of that, in the end repair was not an option. What it became was renovation, and that was based on the list given to us by the town of Blacksburg building inspector. And whether we like it or not, those were the things that were going to have to be fixed to get a certificate of occupancy for that building. And it grew far beyond the \$15 million for repairs. And at some point it just didn't make sense anymore. So if we don't build a high school in Blacksburg, what is the alternative? The alternative is to do nothing. Ms. Mengel believes a couple of decades of doing nothing in the 70s and 80s got us to where we are now with our school construction and she doesn't think those children should stay in school in Christiansburg for a long term solution. If you look at Auburn Middle School, if you do nothing, is at 150% capacity. We have 10 mobile units behind the school, some that have been there since the school opened, others that have been added over the years and that was supposed to be a short term fix for us. It hasn't been short term, it's been long term. Some of you might be aware that a couple of weeks ago one of those mobile units caught on fire. My daughter was in that mobile unit. And luckily they all got out before anything serious happened and everything was fine, but that's just another safety issue associated with mobile units being used long term. They should only be short term solutions. The high school is old, it has problems. It is overcrowded, we have mobile units there. So if you don't do anything then our students stay in unsafe, inadequate facilities. As far as building a new school, again, that has been a long process, there have been a lot of cuts along the way. Each high school was cut 25,000sq to save on budget. Each school construction project has undergone a value engineering process which means you look at the plan, what can be reduced, what can be cut, where can materials be downgraded but still be quality materials, but a way to save money. So all of the things have happened for all the school construction projects as a way to try and make it more affordable. She does fully support the tax increase to fund our education and fund our school construction projects.

Eddie Evans 2806 Tall Oaks Drive, Blacksburg. Mr. Evans informed the Board that he lives behind the new school that is going to be built, and the three soccer fields. He opposes the three soccer fields and the new school. He has lived in Montgomery County all his life, and graduated from Blacksburg High School. It is Mr. Evans' understanding that the building inspector for the Town of Blacksburg provided the report on the bad shape of the Blacksburg High School; he believes an unbiased person should have been called in to inspect the building. He is retired, and retired people are having a hard time paying for anything extra. He also knows that it is always cheaper to build something in a straight line, and a lot of money could have been saved with a straight line school, and the kids would be just as well educated. He asked that the Board re-evaluate the proposed 12¢ tax increase, wait for the state to approve their budget, and get reaction from the people who will have to pay the increased taxes.

Christopher Jordan 4130 Crimson Drive, Blacksburg. Mr. Jordan stated that he does not work for Montgomery County public schools, but was here to support the proposed tax increase. Fundamentally, people do not move to Montgomery County for low property tax rates, but because it's a clean, safe family-friendly community with an excellent educational system. Education is central to the health of the community whether you have children in school or not. The health of the educational system helps to drive employment, growth and change in a community. We need to respect our public servants, the teachers, officers, fire fighters, they keep us safe and keep our community strong. Montgomery County has built its reputation on a strong educational system and a commitment to a high quality of life. He urged the Board to vote for the proposed tax increase to help support and continue our high quality of life.

Chris Symanoskie 395 Howery Street, Christiansburg. Mr. Symanoski spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Taxes are going up everywhere and he can't afford it any more. One of the luxuries he can afford, is a private education for his children. His children attend St. John Newman Academy and their learning outcomes are 20% better than in Blacksburg and Christiansburg, and they do it on a shoestring budget. He suggested that Board members visit St. John Newman and learn what they're doing, and apply that to Montgomery County public schools. It is not about teacher quality, they are able to do it through really low facilities cost and through some other sacrifices. Mr. Symanoskie said he would be honored to meet Board members at the school and show them what they are doing in a very affordable way, and a highly successful way.

Marjorie Mullins 220 Citrine Court, Christiansburg. Ms. Mullins is a 3rd grade teacher in Montgomery County and has two children that attend Montgomery County schools and she wanted to say that teachers are also struggling. They pay taxes, their pay rate has not increased since 2008, some teachers are having to get second jobs. She became a teacher because she loves teaching, but the classrooms are already full and she worries about her future at Gilbert Linkous and that Harding Avenue possibly is going to close. That kind of sets the environment for teachers to really start to worry. Teachers work very hard and put in a lot of hours, if they do leave at 3:30, they're taking stuff home with them and there are meetings, there are parent conferences, there is training, and the teachers do it because they love teaching. As a parent, she is proud that her kids are in the public school system, and proud to see what they are doing and that they will continue through Montgomery County schools.

Patricia Lovell 304 Lucas Drive, Blacksburg. She thanked the Board of Supervisors for what they have been through and their hard work to continue to see this through. She hopes that every opportunity to scrutinize this increase has been done, that every opportunity to find resources and tap into them has been done, but if, at the end of the day, all of that has been done and 12¢ is

what we need to go forward, then she would support it. Ms. Lovell explained that she bought her house because the Harding Avenue elementary school was there, the middle school was there on Main Street, and the high school was a short distance away. When the gym roof collapsed at the high school, she originally wanted to see the school rebuilt until she and saw the reports about the tremendous problems with the school. She believes everyone wants to see Montgomery County prosper. We have to have a good education and we have to have skilled labor in order to bring in more businesses. We are privileged to have Virginia Tech and Radford that give greatly to the school system, and with the schools and with the money we put into the schools they will continue to give. She asked the Board to approve the 12¢ tax increase.

Marianne Hanson 307 Eakin Street, Blacksburg. Ms. Hanson spoke in support of the proposed 12¢ tax increase. Her son is currently in the 10th grade and if the high school is built he will be in the first graduating class from the new high school. There were a lot of long, hard public discussions about whether to build a new high school, and the right decision was made based on the available evidence at the time. For those people who oppose building a new school, she wonders if they were here listening to all the arguments when the decision was being made, because she thinks it was a good decision, not only for her son, but for all the other children in the County.

Susan Morakowski 15015 Westover Drive, Blacksburg. Ms. Morakowski spoke in support of the proposed 12¢ tax increase. She appreciates how complex the decision is and how hard it is for the Board to deal with the situation they are facing. We live in a vibrant, growing community, as citizens we need to accept the responsibility of that and keep investing in the public services that we enjoy. She asked that the Board approve the proposed 12¢ tax increase and to start planning now to increase it significantly again next year.

Lynn Everett 1610 Westover Drive, Blacksburg. Ms. Everett grew up a farmer's daughter and has a lot of sympathy for the lady that spoke earlier. Her parents are still farmers, they are retirees living in Brunswick County. Ms. Everett called her parents and asked them their thoughts on a tax increase. Her mother told her she wanted to live in a safe society and wanted to live in a place she could be proud of every day, that the kids are growing up to be good citizens, to take care of her, and there is no other alternative. The reason Ms. Everett did not move back to Brunswick County when she came to Montgomery County twenty-five years ago. was because back in Brunswick County she had to attend private schools, the schools were not safe and they were not a good school system. They still struggle to put kids in good school systems there. Her daughter was in the Blacksburg High School gym the night before the roof collapsed, and she witnessed the gym roof falling because she was getting ready to go in and have soccer practice. If you ask her to this day, she will tell you that she will never step foot again into that building, it was too scary.

James Milton 8919 Roanoke Road, Elliston. Speaking as a current farmer, one who knows about working hard for what you get, Mr. Milton said he would like to point out that he owns land in just about every area of the County, and a 12¢ tax increase would be a lot of money to him. His income is based upon what other people want to pay for his product and isn't always consistent. He talked about how it could change their lives. It could change what he has, what he will have, and what he can do for the rest of his life. He agrees that education is needed, but whether you are teaching in a shack, whether you're teaching in a mobile home, or whether you're teaching in the best school possible, it is the people in that building that makes that building. It is the teachers that make the difference.

Theodore Marshall Mr. Marshall introduced himself as a farmer in eastern Montgomery County. He opposes raising the property taxes. Raising taxes will be a further hindrance to good stewards of the land who are entitled to operate and support their means of living, and he does not believe there should be a tax increase at this time.

The following letter was read into the record:

“My name is E. Frank Pearsall, II of 1852 Oilwell Road, Blacksburg. I appreciate this hearing but cannot stay another 1 ½ - 2 hours after the break to be heard and know you would like to go home too. I am disappointed that the discussion seems to have been on the value of education. That is not the issue. Everyone values education. The issue is funding. To take an example from the private sector, in a down economy, the options for a restaurant to consider are not about whether serving quality food is a good idea. Of course it is a good idea; even a necessary idea. The issue is how to serve quality food at less cost. The likely solutions are creative solutions, among which are not fancy new buildings or renovations nor increased prices. So the issue before you is how to provide quality education without tax increases. We either cannot afford the cost of these fancy buildings or we cannot afford some of the federal mandates. I bet Ken Cuccinelli might help push back on federal mandates. And I am sure the cost of the new schools can be trimmed.

E. Frank Pearsall”

The following e-mails were received by Board members:

“March 19, 2012

Members of the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors, Mr. Jones and Mr. Meadows:

I am a resident of Riner, VA and I have proudly been a resident of Montgomery County for the past 20 years. For many years I have enjoyed all that Montgomery County has to offer including the natural wonder, great schools and reliable county services such as sewer and water. I have also enjoyed what I consider to be low taxes as compared to nearby Roanoke County. I completely understand and support that the time is now to increase taxes by a modest, yet reasonable, amount to sustain our county and to invest in what I consider to be the greatest investment we could ever make – our children. I am unable to attend any of the upcoming budget hearings due to an extremely busy work schedule but please allow this communication to voice my support for the proposed 12¢ increase in county taxes. I do not believe that any of us should be asked to sacrifice the quality of education, and therefore the future, for any of our children.

Best regards,
Richard Shumaker
1745 Turnberry Lane
Riner, VA 24149”

“March 28, 2012.

To: Montgomery County Board of Supervisors

From: James A. Overfelt, 1250 Burley Lane, 24060

Dear Honorable member(s) of the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors,

I cannot attend your meeting on March 29, 2012 but please consider my comments below:

1. Keep the current real estate rate of \$0.75
2. Stop the construction of a new Montgomery County High School in Blacksburg
3. Repair the current Montgomery County High School located in Blacksburg
4. Reduce spending to maintain the current level of taxation
5. Develop a financial plan to reduce the debt on Montgomery County

It takes a brave person to increase spending and taxes in today's economic climate. I don't want you to be brave; I want you to be logical and responsible. I know you will do your best. (Yes you may save this email for legal purposes) Sincerely, James Overfelt, 1250 Burley Lane, Blacksburg, VA 24060"

"March 29, 2012

Members of the Board of Supervisors:

My name is Wayne Worner; I reside at 910 Mason Drive in Blacksburg. I had fully intended to attend and participate in the public hearing on the tax rate and budget this evening (Thursday, March 29, 2012). Unfortunately a family medical issue has made that impossible. Were I to have been there I would have:

- Thanked the Board of Supervisors and Staff for their efforts to find a balance between the services desired by the citizens and their willingness to pay for those services. You work long and hard to reach those decisions and I greatly appreciate your efforts. I know your deliberations are thoughtful and balanced.
- I also want to acknowledge the efforts of the School Board in trying to present a budget that will meet the needs of the students preparing for life in an increasingly complex society. The administration, teachers and support staff of the school division are dedicated and competent. They deserve consideration for increased compensation. I know that the proposed budget will not address all of the needs that they identified but am confident they will be good stewards of the resources you make available.
- Likewise the other departments and agencies dependent on funding from the County are, by and large, struggling to meet their commitments during a time when the General Assembly has failed in its responsibility to support those services. They deserve you(r) support as well.

Finally, I would stand in support of the proposed increase in the mill levy. I would have preferred a slightly higher rate but understand that you are balancing those competing demands for services against ability to pay and will support your decision in that regard. I also support the proposed budget as presented. I am sorry I was unable to make these views publicly but trust you will take them into consideration anyway.

Sincerely,
Wayne Worner"

There being no further speakers, the Chair closed the public hearing and announced there would be a short recess before beginning the public hearing on the proposed budget.

Advertised 2012-2013 Budget - \$162,559,084

The Chair called the public hearing to order at 10:25 p.m. for the purpose of receiving comments on the County's advertised budget for FY 2012-2013 in the amount of \$162,559,084. He asked that each speaker come to the podium and state their name and address, and direct their comments to the Chair and the members of the Board, not to the audience or the county staff. Each speaker will be allowed five minutes. The Chair explained that all comments must be directed to the Chair and members of the Board, and not members of the audience or staff. He asked that both speakers and the audience exercise courtesy at all times.

Mary Alison Galway 606 Alleghany Street, Blacksburg. Ms. Galway considers herself very lucky because education was something her parents valued and made sure all their children had the opportunity to go to college. When she graduated from Rutgers University in 1969 her tuition for a semester was \$200 and room and board was \$200; so when we talk about how prices have gone up, she doesn't think we should short change the schools. Ms. Galway's brother had a learning disability, except they didn't know about those then, so he was considered just slow. He would have benefited from longer test times because he could do the work, it just took him a lot longer to do it. Her mother had to work with him every evening, she got him special tutoring, she took him to doctors, it was just this sort of endless twenty-year struggle, to get him into college, to a special college that would have special remedial type classes to start him off and keep him going. He has never made more than \$25,000 a year. Although she has a Ph.D., Ms. Galway considers her brother one of the smartest people she knows, but it is not book smart, it is people smart and he is a very good friend to a lot of people. Her brother, without her mother's help, would have fallen through the cracks. They didn't have all the remedial help and they didn't have all the extra help that kids can get now. There are all kinds of kids out there who are going to fall through the cracks if you let them. But to sacrifice those kids is not an answer. The federal government is trying to cut, pushing it down to the states, the states want to cut, and nobody wants to raise taxes, and they're pushing it onto municipalities and the counties. She voiced her appreciation for the hard work the Board does and how late they stay at these meetings, and she urged the Board to fully fund the proposed budget.

Jim Epperly Speaking on behalf of the County's volunteer fire and rescue, he thanked the Board for supporting the fire and rescue volunteers. They receive thousands and thousands of calls, and none go unanswered in the County. All the county services are provided by volunteers, the Fire and Rescue Commission has worked hard and they have been blessed with a member of the Board of Supervisors to guide them and the County Administrator to guide them. The Assistant County Administrator has been a blessing, she has the numbers background that they all need. He thanked the Board for providing for them better than it used to be. He thanked the Board for providing an Emergency Services Coordinator to do the work that the volunteers had to do on their own up until the past few years. And he expressed his personal appreciation to the Board.

Andrew Mike 209 Tee Street, Apt. 10, Blacksburg. Mr. Mike spoke about the importance of public education. He mentioned that someone had spoken earlier about private schools and about how they educate all these people and they perform better on a shoestring budget, etc. but he pointed out that they do not accept kids with learning disabilities. Mr. Mike stated that when he was five years old he was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and had trouble learning early on and has trouble organizing his thoughts sometimes. However, he got through his schooling because of the special ed teachers that he had in high school and in lower schools that helped him learn and provided him with the tools he needed in order to help him learn. He believes all of this was possible because communities believe in public education, and he urged the Board to make sure that education funding is a priority in this County because if it

isn't, a lot of people that would not be served by private schools would fall by the wayside when public education quality inevitably dwindles and people turn to private schools and they stop believing in public education because eventually they will, when things stop functioning, people lose faith in it.

Bruce Cunningham 1515 Red Hawk Run, Blacksburg. Mr. Cunningham said that his wife just informed him that the House passed the budget, so if the legislators in the Senate will act more like statesmen and not politicians, hopefully there will be some new money for the county to include in their budget. After hearing about the 16% proposed tax increase he looked at the budget that was advertised, which raised some questions such as a revenue stabilization fund. He is assuming the county capital fund of \$700,000 is a reserve fund, expense fund that goes into reserves. Take the two and add them together is over a million dollars and he is assuming that goes to the reserve fund, which he just found out may be \$3 or \$4 million. Everyone knows that we do need a reserve fund. One of the things that jumped out at Mr. Cunningham is the article that was written indicating that in the past three years, the debt service increased 139%, and that is pretty alarming, while the overall budget increased only 3.9%. Once you start paying for debt, it leaves less money for goods and services. While losing federal and state funds he believes the Board is doing the best it can, we need to tell our legislators to act more like statesmen and not politicians, and provide additional funding to the localities.

Richard Workman 212 Pine Drive, Blacksburg. Mr. Workman asked that he be provided a written response to his questions and comments. He stated that there is the usual turn-out from the school employees, they want more and they need more, but he needed to tell the Board how much the proposed 12¢ tax increase is going to hurt low income and senior citizens living on a fixed income. It is going to be the tipping point that may cause a lot of property owners to move from Montgomery County. The citizens of Blacksburg and Christiansburg also have a town property tax to pay. In his case, if the tax rate of 87¢ if approved, plus the 22¢ he pays in Blacksburg, is a total of \$1.09 in property taxes, a rate that is comparable to northern Virginia. Mr. Workman emphasized that he is not against education and that, in fact, he had married a teacher, and in past years of his career he served on a school board. He suggested the Board needs a professional consulting firm to analyze the budget requests. The School Board submits their budget request in four or five categories and not by line item. He asked if that is how the other departments of county government submit their budget requests. We have a government with systems and benefits and programs that we are beginning to learn that we cannot support.

There being no further speakers, the Chair thanked everyone for coming to the public hearings. Speaking on behalf of the Board of Supervisors, the Chair noted that all comments will be taken into consideration before a final decision is made.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chair declared the meeting adjourned to Monday, April 2, 2012.

The meeting adjourned at 10:55 p.m.

APPROVED: _____
James D. Politis, Chair
Board of Supervisors

ATTEST: _____
F. Craig Meadows
County Administrator